

Weigh In!

Want to test a new tool or share a tool-related testimonial, gripe, or technique? Contact us at JLCTools@hanleywood.com



Fiskars Hammers and Mauls

BY TIM UHLER

In February, I saw Fiskars hammers featured in *Tools of the Trade* (a sister publication to *JLC*) and was intrigued by the IsoCore grip design, so I asked to test out a couple of hammers. I also requested a 3-pound club hammer, which we use for driving stakes when we are working on foundations.

FEATURES

One of the major reasons I use a Stiletto TiBone hammer is that it transmits almost no vibration—in fact, I can't feel any when I strike a nail. Fiskars claims that the IsoCore, which consists of an insulation sleeve in the handle, absorbs the shock, resulting in four times less shock than with wood-handled hammers.

Another feature of the striking tools is an orange rubbery grip. Fiskars says that the dimples on the handles reduce blisters; I can't attest to that, as we just don't drive that many nails, and during the time of year we tested the tools, we were wearing gloves. The hammers also have a slot and magnet to hold a nail.

FRAMING HAMMER

I love the tools' grip, which provides a secure hold even in the rain. The IsoCore does dampen vibration compared with a wood-handled hammer, but I did still feel some vibration—more than with the TiBone I normally use, which has virtually no vibration.

If you want a hammer with a handle that won't break (I originally switched to the TiBone because I was tired of breaking handles—and because it was a present), has a super-comfortable grip, and dampens vibration, then I highly recommend the Fiskars IsoCore hammer. It runs about \$60 and so won't break the bank.

THREE-POUND CLUB MAUL

We always keep a mini-sledge around for moving walls or setting large beams—and especially when we are driving stakes when forming foundations. We have done plenty of those tasks lately and I can say that this maul is my favorite of all the mauls I've ever used. It has the perfect length handle for the 3-pound head. Because it was so well balanced, in fact, I used it more than I've used other mauls before. For example, I used it to tighten all the form shoes (wedge ties) on a wall. Just a tap tightened them up, whereas with a hammer, I would have needed to hit the shoes a few times. At \$40, every tradesperson should have one of these. fiskars.com

Tim Uhler is lead framer for Pioneer Builders in Port Orchard, Wash., and a contributing editor to Tools of the Trade.

The IsoCore grip reduces vibration, but doesn't eliminate it.

The new Fiskars hammers feature a soft, comfortable handle design and a magnetic nail holder. The 3-pound Club Maul (below, left) is well-balanced and has the ideal length handle for the head. The author noticed a marked difference between the vibration of these hammers and mauls compared with that of traditional wood-handled versions.



Skilsaw Wormdrive Table Saw

BY MICHAEL SPRINGER

I used the new Skilsaw model SPT70WT-22 table saw for more than a month, and overall it fit my expectations of a jobsite saw built for framing and rough carpentry. It didn't quite make the cut for finer woodworking uses like glue-line rips and joinery, but Skil's framing heritage endows this saw with more of an "outside dog" pedigree anyway. With its wormdrive motor, it's more at home with its feet planted in the dirt and sawdust of the jobsite than on a workshop floor.

OUT OF THE BOX

When I first lifted the saw, I was impressed by its light weight and easy handling. At 51 pounds and with a table size of 23½ inches wide and a mere 20 inches front to back, it is compact—not as small as the "flooring" table-saw class, but somewhere between that and a standard-size jobsite saw. The Skilsaw could undoubtedly be attached to aftermarket stands, but in keeping with the saw's small and simple demeanor, I tested it on the brand's optional folding stand (model SPTA70WT-ST).

The unique thing about the Skilsaw is that it's the first table saw powered by a wormdrive motor—the same motor found on the circular saws the brand is famous for. Users unfamiliar with wormdrive motors will have to keep in mind that this saw has a gearbox filled with oil that must be checked and changed out at specified intervals.

Like most woodworking machinery—bench-top or otherwise—table saws require thorough checking and calibrating before use. I had to spend at least an hour tinkering with the Skilsaw before I could "let 'er rip." As I made my adjustments, I began to appreciate the open frame design of the saw, because it allowed me unfettered access to the working parts of the saw—unlike with a saw enclosed by a plastic body. In fact, there's barely any plastic at all on this saw, which is another aspect to admire. The open space afforded by the

tubular steel frame was put to good use with storage slots for the saw's fence, miter gauge, blade wrench, and blade-guard components, all secured within the frame.

HANDS ON

Once I calibrated it for accuracy, I put the saw to work. The Skilsaw did a respectable job cutting small, angled-tenon bridle joints, but I felt like I was reaching the limitations of the saw's finesse with this precision joinery work. In any case, more of a challenge was in order for a saw wearing a Skilsaw nameplate. Cutting sheets of OSB isn't much of a workout for most table saws, so besides doing that common job, I ripped more than a quarter-mile of 2-by-lumber (including 2x8x16s) and spent hours ripping hundreds of linear feet of 4x4s with the saw's blade fully buried in the wood.

Under those conditions, I was impressed by the Skilsaw's power and stamina. Over the many hours I ran the saw in a day—sometimes for more than an hour at a time without turning it off—I never heard the saw slow or falter, or smelled anything "hot" that would have been cause for alarm. The Skilsaw wormdrive motor is a great fit for this saw and delivers heavy-duty performance, as promised.

BOTTOM LINE

The Skilsaw SPT70WT-22 offers powerful performance in a compact table saw. I wouldn't say it's just a framer's saw, but rough carpentry is where its true strengths lie. You can rev it up and feed 4x4s through it all day without any problems as long it remains in good adjustment. A trim carpenter or woodworker might be put off by the play in the arbor, motor-raising assembly, or rear trunnion connection—all of which could create an obstacle for setting up and achieving the finest work.

Michael Springer is a former executive editor of Tools of the Trade.



Lightweight and portable. A padded handle built into the saw's side allows for one-handed carrying. The "-22" version of the saw tested comes with an upgraded 30-tooth Diablo ripping blade, versus the "-01" model, which ships with a Skil blade.

SPT70WT-22 Specs

Motor: 15 amps; 5,300 rpm; worm drive
Table: 23½ inches wide; 20 inches front to back
Weight: 51 pounds
Max. depth of cut: 3½+ (almost 3⅞) inches
Max. bevel angle: 45 degrees
Max. fence setting: 25 inches
Price: \$380; optional folding stand, \$80

An Affordable Dustless Drywall Sander

BY MYRON FERGUSON

Over the course of my drywall-contracting career, I have tried a lot of tools, and often I end up asking myself, “What were they thinking?” Sometimes, however, I appreciate a manufacturer’s knowledge of the drywall industry, and that’s the case with Full Circle, which has been in the drywall-sanding business for a long time.

VERSATILE SYSTEM

I’ve been using Full Circle’s Radius 360 sanding system for many years and I like it for its versatility. So when I saw that Full Circle had developed a dust-control version of this system, I wanted to try it out. The Radius 360 Air is very similar to the regular Radius 360 sander, which is the only pole sander I used for years. The hub of the sander where the handle attaches is detachable so that a different hub can be attached. Changing the hub converts the pole sander into a hand sander. The hose, which has a flexible end, attaches to the handle of the hand-sander hub and easily rotates 360 degrees. The hose connects to any shop vacuum and didn’t get in the way when I was sanding.

Other features of the Radius 360 Air include the use of regular Radius 360 sanding discs—no need for holes in the paper or for sanding screen. The brushes around the disc contain the dust, which is directed to the edges of the disc where it is then sucked away. This base moves independently of the shroud for even greater smoothness of movement and the best dust-controlled sanded finish.

The other sander included in the kit is called a Flex Air Sander and can be used as a pole or hand sander using the interchangeable hubs. This rectangular-shaped sander is great for general sanding but is designed for smaller jobs, detail sanding, and getting into tight places, such as inside corner edges. The Flex Air is the perfect tool for corner and detail sanding. The “no flip” pole swivel is designed to keep the Flex Air in a working position for ease of use and uninterrupted sanding. It uses specially made sandpaper and pads, which are available in a variety of grits.

VERDICT

This dustless version is incredibly versatile and durable. I like the ability to change sanding heads, and I like the improved mechanism for holding the sandpaper. The brushes around the circular head do a good job containing dust and don’t leave marks on the drywall. All in all, each of the heads did a nice job containing and capturing dust. I would recommend this system to anyone who sands drywall regularly—either by hand or with a pole.

Myron Ferguson is a drywall contractor in Middle Grove, N.Y.



Manual sanding with dust collection.

The Radius 360 Air converts from a pole sander to a hand sander. The circular head accepts standard Radius 360 sanding discs. When attached to the pole, the heads pivot and rotate for full range of motion.

The kit includes:

- Radius 360° Air Dustless Sanding Tool
 - Flex Air Dustless Sanding Tool
 - Two-piece pole assembly
 - Orbiting adapter handle
 - Hose assembly with assorted fittings for vacuum connections
 - Set of Radius 360 sanding discs: 150, 180, and 220 grit
 - Set of Flex Air sanding paper: 150, 180, and 220 grit
 - Pair of Flex Air Foam Abrasives: fine and medium
- Price:** about \$180

Photos: Chris Ermlides